

57 LAYOFFS BY CARDINAL SP: COMPANY BLAMES CHINESE COMPETITION



Cardinal Solar Technologies, Minn., announced 57 layoffs on Wednesday following the reduction of orders from one of the plant's primary customers. Jeff Valek, the plant manager reported that the plant has only 20 employees left, mostly salaried and maintenance workers. Hourly production workers have lost their jobs. The company president Bob Bond reported that the prices of solar photovoltaic modules have been falling steeply over the past seven to eight months, with the market overrun by goods from China. Bond said, "We believe (the layoff) to be temporary. We believe our customer will come back when the imbalance is, hopefully, corrected." The Cardinal ST Plant in Mazomanie had opened in 2009, with a \$5.5 million facility housed in a 180,000 square-foot building. The plant has a 120-foot long convection furnace that tempers the glass and heats the facility. It took six months to setup. From initial staff strength of around 30 people, the plant had grown to provide for 80 employees in the last two years. The recent setback has hurt the company deeply. The president of Cardinal ST said that the demand for the solar photovoltaic technology remains high and several more extra-large installations had been planned around the U.S. "We are very active in the rest of the market, trying to find more opportunity for that plant," said Bond. Company representatives said that the company has some other customers and there is hope that things may get back to normal. "We will try to hire all these people back and then more," expressed the representative. Cardinal ST is a division of Cardinal Glass Industries; Eden Prairie, Minn. Cardinal Glass Industries has 5,500 employees and 27 factories. Besides the factories spread around Wisconsin in different localities, the company has a research and development center in Spring Green.

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